

[English]

DR. K.P. RAMALINGAM (Tiruchengode) : Sir, I want to raise a very important issue in this august House.

The biggest sandalwood godown is situated in Thirupattur of Tamil Nadu. In that Depot, yesterday, there was a major fire accident due to which Rs. 100 crore worth of sandalwood was damaged.

The Central Government banned the sandalwood exports from 1992 onwards. Due to the ban on the export of sandalwood and chips, the buyers have not lifted the stocks, and the stocks have been accumulating in the Depot.

Now, apart from Thirupattur Depot, Salem Depot, Sathiamangalam Depot and other Depots in Tamil Nadu have stocks of more than Rs. 600 crore worth sandalwood. Regarding the lifting of ban on the export of sandalwood, our Tamil Nadu Government has written several letters to the Central Government. Due to enormous delay by the Central Government, the Tamil Nadu Government is incurring heavy losses on the stocks held in these Depots. So, the Central Government must lift the ban on the export of sandalwood immediately.

Another important issue is that in Periyar District of Tamil Nadu, which comes under my constituency, the coconut trees in thousands of hectares are affected by an unidentified disease.

Due to that, coconut trees spread over lakhs of acres are damaged. The disease will be spread over to Kerala also through Pollachi. So, that disease must be identified. One expert team of scientists must be sent to Tamil Nadu. Then, relief fund must be given to the farmers. I demand that per acre, about Rs. 15,000 relief fund must be sanctioned by the Government.

Sir, this is a matter of highest urgency. The Government must see to it that necessary action is taken in this regard....(Interruptions)

[Translation]

PROF. RITA VERMA : Mr. Chairman, Sir, I have given a notice of privilege regarding Bihar ... (Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN : There is nothing about it. You please sit down. Don't waste the time of other members. Mr. Handique please speak.

(Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN : Your notice has not come to me. Please sit down. It might be with the Speaker. He must be examining it. You please take your seat.

(Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN : You are also raising the same issue. You are on the panel. Please take your seat.

(Interruptions)

SHRI LAL MUNI CHAUBEY (Buxor) : A train dacoity has taken place and a number of people have been killed in it....(Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN : Let him complete, then I will listen to you. Let him complete. Please sit down. It is of no use to keep on standing.

(Interruptions)

[English]

SHRI BIJOY HANDIQUE (Jorhat) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, the Tocklai Experimental Station in Assam, a Tea Research Institute established in 1911, the first of its kind in the whole world, is paralysed by a three-month long strike arising out of mismanagement and is on the brink of collapse. Only a couple of such Institutes exist in the world today.

Sir, the decline of this world famous Institute began in 1989 when it was withdrawn from the management of CSIR and was transferred to the Tea Research Association, a cooperative set up and funded by the Tea Board to the extent of 50 per cent of its budget allocation. In addition to the resource crunch, bad management and lack of purpose and a sense of direction have frustrated the employees and scientists.

In a written reply to my question on the subject, the hon. Commerce Minister chose in his wisdom to leave the matter to the Tea Research Association interpreting the matter as a private sector dispute. The Government cannot wash its hands off like that. Till 1989, it was under the CSIR and Government cannot afford to remain a dumb witness to the drifting of this world famous Institute into purposelessness and to the undoing of research and development of tea, which is one of the biggest foreign exchange earners.

During the last visit of the hon. Speaker in the month of February, all the employees and scientists met him and drew his kind attention to the problems of the Institute. I, therefore, urge upon the Commerce Minister to depute a senior officer of the Ministry to visit the place and to meet both the management and the employees and scientists and amicably settle the matter. Only, Governmental intervention can save the Tocklai Experimental Station. It will be a colossal national loss if this Institute is closed down.

The hon. Members of Parliament of the North-Eastern Region have already submitted a memorandum to the hon. Minister seeking his immediate intervention. So, I request the Government to do the needful in this regard....(Interruptions)

[Translation]

SHRI RAM NAIK (Mumbai North) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, my submission is that when the matter of Bihar was raised here on Saturday. I was told that I would be allowed to speak on Monday....(Interruptions)